

Eurasia Foundation International Lectures, Fall 2021 Semester
“Asian Community: The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology”
Lecture Series (17)

Title: “Perspective from Outside”: East Asia from Russian Perspective

For the 17th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 110th academic year of the Chinese Culture University, we invite Associate Professor Zenya Tsukamoto from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at Chinese Culture University as our speaker and give a speech entitled “‘Perspective from Outside’: East Asia from Russian Perspective.”

First, Professor Tsukamoto explained that the “perspective from outside” means the relativization of self-cognition. To judge things and understand the world, you must have your own thoughts and experience, but more importantly, you need to constantly doubt and examine your self-cognition. Otherwise, you will fall into the predicament of egocentrism. Thus, what is needed to “break out of egocentrism” is an “perspective from outside.”

Professor Tsukamoto cites Tadao Yanaihara’s *Teikokushugi ka no Taiwan* (帝國主義下の台灣, Taiwan under Imperialism) (1929) as an example. Professor Yih-ling Ho (何義麟), who was invited to this series of lecture, wrote in his book that *Taiwan under Imperialism* put forward a critical point of view on the capitalism of colonial Taiwan, and analyzed the modernization process of Taiwan. This book was also translated and published in the Soviet Union in 1934, on the background of Stalin’s world strategy, which was eager to expand the national liberation movement. As mentioned above, there are different interpretations of the same book when viewed from different angles. In other words, it is extremely important to have ideas and opinions that are different from one’s own = having an “perspective from outside.” This lecture will adopt the perspective of Russia, its “perspective from outside” toward East Asia, Taiwan and Japan, in particular.

Professor Tsukamoto first introduced the “Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy” conducted by the Cabinet Office of Japan in 2020. In this survey, 85.7% of Japanese “do not feel closeness to Russia”; 73.9% of Japanese “do not feel that Japan and Russia have good relations.” In contrast, in the 2019 “Russian Public Opinion Survey on Japan,” 71% of Russians answered that Russia has “friendly relations with Japan”; and 45% of Russians believed that “Japan is trustworthy.” Such an impression of Russia on Japan is surprising to the Japanese. The above examples demonstrated that the “impressions” that “we” hold on many things should be frequently re-examined.

Oriental studies in Russia, mainly based on the needs of geopolitics, were founded by Peter the Great. In the past, the sources of information between Japan and Russia about each other were mostly from castaway and captives. For example, the castaway Dembei was hired as a teacher at the world's first Japanese language school founded by Peter the Great. In addition, gonza (ゴンザ), a castaway from the Satsuma Domain (now Kagoshima), compiled the world's first Russian-Japanese dictionary. Among the castaways, the most famous is Kōdayū Daikokuya (大黒屋光太夫), who brought Russian information back to Japan, and Hoshū Katsuragawa later reorganize and wrote Daikokuya's information about Russia into a book entitled *Hokusa bunryaku* (北槎聞略). Similarly, naval officer Vasily Mikhailovich Golovnin brought the information of Japan back to Russia. From 1811, he was imprisoned in Japan for 2 years, and after returning to Russia, he wrote a book entitled *Captivity in Japan During the Years 1811, 1812, 1813* (日本幽囚記). The book highly praises Japan and the Japanese. This book has revised the previous European perception of Japan as “barbaric and uncivilized country.”

The most important historical event between Japan and Russia was the Russo-Japanese War. The background of this incident was the Yellow Peril ideology that has been widely circulated in Europe and the United States since the end of the 19th century. Meanwhile, as a reaction force against the fear of Asia, “Japonisme” has prevailed in Europe and the United States. With art as the main axis, Japonism has become more and more widely spread in Russia. Professor Tsukamoto introduced the paintings created by Russian painters influenced by Ukiyo-e (浮世絵) as an example. Moreover, Russian artists learned from Japan's traditional arts to create works, and then they influenced Japanese artists and so on, all of which are examples of cultural interaction.

In addition, there are also many Russian Scholars specializing in Japanese studies. Professor Tsukamoto introduced Serge Elisséeff (born Sergei Grigorievich Elisseyev) as an example. During the Meiji era, Elisséeff studied at Tokyo Imperial University and specialized in Japanese literature. During his stay in Japan, Elisséeff established connections with top intellectuals such as Soseki Natsume, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Kunio Yanagita, and studied Japanese studies. Elisséeff then became the first director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute at Harvard University, and he was widely known for his deeds such as cultivating many American Japanologist. Among the most famous are Edwin O. Reischauer, U.S. Ambassador to Japan in

the era of President Kennedy; Donald Keene, who left many works; and E. Seidensticker, who was the English translator of *the Tale of Genji*. In addition, Professor Tsukamoto also introduced contemporary Russian scholars specializing in Taiwan Studies. One is Golovachev and the other is Molodyakov. After the 20th century, both of them actively carried out related research and played a great role in deepening Taiwan studies in Russia.

Finally, Professor Tsukamoto mentioned in the above discussion that both Taiwan and Russia are Pacific Rim countries and should have worked closely together. Therefore, it is essential to know and conduct research on each other. At the same time, in order to rethink the study of the self, it is more important to be aware of the “Perspective from Outside.”

(Website link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

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